

**Extreme size variation in the hoverfly *Episyrphus balteatus* (Degeer)
(Dip.: Syrphidae)**

This very common hoverfly is particularly characteristic, with its double, black bands on tergites 3 and 4, but these abdominal markings can be extremely variable. It also varies tremendously in its size: Stubbs & Falk (1983, *British hoverflies: an illustrated identification guide*. BENHS) give a wing length of from 6 to 10.25 mm. In a collection of set specimens, such variation is easy to overlook; relative proportions and overall appearance seem much more important to the entomologist's eye. But seeing them next to each other in nature can be quite a jolt, as was brought home to me when I took the accompanying photograph. On 8 August 1997, several hogweed umbels on the wayside of a small parking place near the National Trust reserve at Frithsden Beeches (grid reference SP 998110), Buckinghamshire, were dripping with hoverflies. Many dozens of *Episyrphus balteatus*, *Scaeva pyrastris* (L.) and *Eupeodes luniger* (Mg.) were jostling together in the sultry morning warmth. After taking a few general photos I noticed two dramatically different specimens of *Episyrphus* (Figure 1). The original 35mm slide was taken at a magnification of approximately life-size; thus, the lightly-marked male, to the left, has a wing length of about 10mm, whilst the heavily-marked but diminutive female to the right has a wing length of only about 6.5mm.—RICHARD A. JONES, 135 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 0AZ. (E-mail: bugmanjones@hotmail.com).



Figure 1. Size variation in *Episyrphus balteatus* (Degeer).